

Program offers free smoke alarms in Mesa

University, Country Club area homes to get items, help

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FOR THE TRIBUNE

A program offering free dual-sensor smoke alarms and fresh batteries for alarms already installed was announced Thursday by the Mesa Fire Department.

A new partnership with the Foundation of Burns and Trauma Inc. allowed the department to receive the alarms and batteries to distribute to residents Nov. 8 in the neighborhood of University and Country Club drives.

Volunteers will go door-to-door distributing and installing the smoke alarms. Residents also will receive information on Mesa's Home Safety Inspection Program and be educated on how to maintain the alarms. About 500 homes are targeted.

"The goal of the event is to make each family safer and to provide them with a valuable, lifesaving bit of information," said Carrie Castillo, fire and life safety education specialist with the department.

Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms account for almost a 50 percent decline in fire deaths, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

"It's clear that smoke alarms save lives and should be present in every home," Fire Chief Harry Beck said.

Early warning is crucial for a chance to escape fires. When smoke alarms are paired with sprinkler systems, they can reduce the risk of dying in a house fire by 82 percent, Beck said.

The city has been doing the annual program for more than 10 years.

Smoke alarms and fresh batteries have been supplied to more than 4,500 homes, City Councilwoman Dina Higgins said.

Castillo said people are generally receptive to the program.

"More times than not, people are very welcoming," she said.

Letters were mailed to area residents explaining the event. Those who don't want to be approached that day can use a doorknob hanger sent with the letter.

Volunteers from Target and the Mesa Fire Department will install the alarms. A grant from Western Refining made the purchase of the alarms possible.